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BOOK REVIEWS

Violations of trust. How social and welfare institutions fail children and young people

Judith Bessant, Richard Hil and Rob Watts (Eds), 2005
Hampshire and Burlington, US, Ashgate Publishing
£46.99, 153 pp.
ISBN 0-7546-1872-2

Judith Bessant, Richard Hil and Rob Watts have put together a set of papers that all focus on the need to restore children's trust in the institutions that are formally and legally charged with their care. The overwhelming majority of contributions in the book come from Australia, although the chapter on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) draws on North American as well as Australian data. There is also some brief mention of the UK situation. Overall, a wide range of topics is included such as an historical perspective on child welfare, the experiences of indigenous children and child refugees in Australia. This is a collection of papers that concentrates on institutional violations of trust and which raises important questions about social justice, human rights and civil liberties. As such, it has an international reach, for children everywhere are frequently subjected to actions taken in their own 'best interests' but about which they are rarely consulted.

At the time of writing this review in London we are, once more, in the grip of a series of panics about childhoods under threat from postmodernist challenges presented by new technologies, changes in families and in society, coupled with unrelenting pressures in schools. Indeed a campaign is on to 'save childhood' and 'save children':

> In a fast-moving hyper-competitive culture, today's children are expected to cope with an ever-earlier start to formal schoolwork and an overly academic test-driven primary curriculum. They are pushed by market forces to act and dress like mini-adults and exposed via the electronic media to material which would have been considered unsuitable for children even in the very recent past. (*Daily Telegraph*, 2006, p. 1)

While this threat to children and childhood is being explored in terms of cultural and social changes (and may well be a symptom of middle-class anxiety) the Australian collection concentrates on 'the various harms occurring within the physical confines of institutions such as detention centres, schools and orphanages' (p. 1). In the light of the social and emotional dilemmas experienced by young children who

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have been 'looked after'[1] in the UK, it is interesting that while we are currently concerned about the 'death of childhood' in a broad sense, we still do not pay much attention to the harms visited upon children in institutional settings (like our own detention camps, children's homes, young offender's institutions as well as schools) some of whom may be vulnerable to permanent damage as a consequence of these experiences. Thus, although this book was published in 2005, in many ways it would seem that its arguments are extremely timely for a UK audience.

The book is divided into eight chapters with an introduction by the editors and a postscript by Uschi Bay. All of the contributors have professional backgrounds in child welfare, child law, social work, advocacy for children, children's rights, and education. Their academic and research interests include studies on state violence, human rights abuse, criminology and social policy. Thus, the book is written from a position of commitment towards civil, political and human rights. This lends an authority and cohesion to the writing and argument.

From a theoretical perspective, while some of the chapters draw on post-modern theory in a direct and unambiguous manner, for example Kelly's chapter entitled 'Dangerousness, surveillance and the institutional mistrust of youth', other writers are also clearly influenced by a Foucauldian analysis. Issues to do with the regulation and disciplining of young people in institutional settings would seem to invite this approach. There is also a serious and well-managed attempt to critically deconstruct what is mean by and involved in 'trust'. But although the theoretical framing is strong across this collection, this is not a book just about theory. Other chapters draw powerfully on detailed accounts of different institutional oppressions of children and young people. What comes out of this book is a voice of righteous anger and a demand for change.

One word of criticism, I would have liked an expanded subject index and it would have been useful to have included a name index too. Nevertheless, this is a powerful and rich mix of fascinating and uniformly well-written papers. The chapters on 'Indigenous children and the state', 'The abuse of young people in Australia' and 'Child refugees' provide ample evidence of a need to face up to the harm that has been done, and continues to be done. As Uschi Bay concludes, 'there is little evidence to suggest that these abuses, these violations of trust are in the past and that our current practices are more humane, just and democratic' (p. 149). Much more work, in terms of legal action, more research and well-informed policy action is needed. This collection is a step towards warning us of and hopefully preventing more institutional 'violations of trust'.

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Notes

1. The term 'looked after' was introduced in England and Wales by the Children Act in 1989 and refers to children who are subject to care orders and those who are accommodated by and are looked after by local authorities.

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Daily Telegraph (2006, 12 September) Modern life leads to more depression among children. Available online at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news (accessed 18 September 2006).

Philosophy of education: aims, theory, common sense and research
Richard Pring, 2004
Continuum Books, London
£60.00 (hbk), £19.99 (pbk), 277 pp.
ISBN 0-8264-7239-7 (hbk), 0-8264-8708-4 (pbk)

This volume is a selection of Professor Pring's articles from 1972 to 2004, thus representing 32 years of professional endeavour. Richard Pring is one of the most distinguished philosophers of education currently working in the English-speaking world and, as well as contributing to central areas of the subject, is a quite distinctive voice, as this volume attests.

Why is his work distinctive? Pring's work has always been informed by a perception of the ethical purposes underlying all serious education. This means that for him teaching is an activity with a high ethical calling for those who practise it. This topic informs the first of the papers in the volume, 'Education as a moral practice'. Pring's contention is that a moral concern should inform the work of teachers; they are entrusted not only with the care of the young's initiation into the world, but with the heritage of the past. Although teaching is a moral practice, it is also one that involves introducing young people to what is worthwhile in the broadest sense and inducting them into a broader ethical community. This theme is pursued in the remaining papers in the first part of the book.

Here we come to the distinctive contribution that he has made. While a staunch defender of the comprehensive ideal as a form of initiation into a democratic community (and the Deweyan influence is evident in most of these papers), Pring has constantly sought to reconcile comprehensive education with the recognition, not only that society's needs are diverse, but also that people's interests and abilities are too. Education must cater for the needs of a commercial society, as well as the personal interests and needs of the young. This leads Pring to a vision of comprehensive schooling that allows for liberal vocationalism and the development of citizenship, together with some of the more traditional aims of secondary education. This preoccupation also shows the author's sensitive appreciation of the relationship between the values, the aims and the practice of education. For Pring, values underpin both the aims and the practice of education and its aims are embodied in the practice. This does not mean, however, that aims are beyond discussion: we need to think much more carefully about what we

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The second part of the book consists of three papers on ‘Common sense and education’, ‘The language of curriculum analysis’ and ‘Knowledge out of control’. Here Pring shows a degree of scepticism about education theory where it adds nothing or very little to our understanding of the field. He is particularly concerned both with theory that oversimplifies reality and misses the richness of educational practice and with theory that moves towards relativism and away from realism. His targets are quite diverse: Basil Bernstein’s curriculum theory is thought to contribute confusing terminology rather than any real understanding (’Common sense and education’); Paul Hirst is also thought to be in some danger of oversimplifying the complex nature of practice (‘The language of curriculum analysis’); while Michael Young pays insufficient attention to conceptual clarification before engaging in curricular theorizing (the same paper).

Relativism and anti-realism are two closely-related positions whose influence in educational research is also a major preoccupation of this volume, particularly in the third and final part. Pring is one of the few philosophers of education working in the UK who maintains a position of informed and constructive engagement towards the empirical educational research community, as these papers fully testify. In them a philosophy of educational research emerges, which is cognisant of the need for conceptual clarification before meaningful research can take place, thus rightly putting philosophical reflection at the heart of empirical investigations. A second feature of this philosophy is a reasoned and measured defence of realism and respect for truth as a regulative ideal in empirical research (‘Truth, knowledge and power’ and ‘The “false dualism” of educational research’). At the same time, the complexity of educational practice means that one cannot simply take research findings and apply them to practice in the expectation that all will be well (‘Evidence-based policy and practice’). This part of the book is also concerned with the ethics of educational research and contains an extremely illuminating and sensitive discussion, acutely informed by a detailed discussion of examples, of the commitments and principles that should inform the work of educational researchers (‘The virtues and vices of an educational researcher’).

One of the pleasures of reading these papers is Pring’s deft use of distinctions which are easily overlooked but which are of major importance. Thus ‘standards’ and ‘performance’ are distinguished and the confusions that arise from their being run together are discussed in ‘Standards and quality in education’; ‘evidence-based education’ is subjected to a dissection of the different kinds of evidence relevant to education and the different ways in which evidence enters educational practice; ‘rules’ and ‘principles’ as different kinds of normative guidance are distinguished in ‘Virtues and vices of an educational researcher’; and the interrelationship of the concepts of *education* and *training* is discussed insightfully in ‘The aim of education’.

From reading these papers one takes away a sense of thought evolving over quite a long period, but also a sense of how fresh and relevant the concerns that they deal with remain. In the UK and more widely, there is still far too little discussion of the aims and values that ought to underpin education. The links between philosophical and empirical work in education are still highly unsatisfactory (although Pring's current work for the Nuffield Foundation goes some way towards addressing this issue). And the delicate relationship between the need for inclusion, solidarity and the recognition of diversity in the secondary phase is still the subject of agonized and ongoing debate and policymaking.

There is little doubt that the lifetime agenda expressed in this collection of papers is an ambitious one and none the worse for that. In concluding this review, I would like to draw attention to some of the issues raised that still seem to me to need further work if the author's hopes are to be realized.

First, the reconciliation of the comprehensive ideal with a genuinely diverse agenda for 11- to 19-year-olds. It seems to be a consequence of the author's views that choices should open up after the age of 14 and that vocational, technical and practical interests should get their proper due. How is this to be reconciled with the comprehensive ideal and with the need to provide work-based as well as school and college-based routes into adult life? Pring rightly emphasizes citizenship education as a unifying feature of the education of this age group ('Political education: relevance of the humanities'), but leaves without a completely satisfactory answer the tension between diversity of provision and relative institutional homogeneity.

Second, the author presents a bold vision in which philosophy has a central role to play in educational research. But as yet we seem to be a long way from realizing this vision. There is still too much reluctance on the part of philosophers of education to engage in empirical work, preferring to trade in mainly negative criticisms from the sidelines. This is partly a result and partly a cause of the suspicion that other educational researchers have of philosophical interventions in empirical work. The third section of the book is a model of how a philosopher should engage with these questions, but we need to see more exemplification of what this would look like in actual empirical work. Fortunately, the author's leadership of the Nuffield 14–19 Review will eventually provide us with some indication of how he thinks this might take shape.

In summary, the book is clearly written and laid out and is a welcome contribution from Continuum to its list in the philosophy of education.

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Ideology, curriculum and the new sociology of education: revisiting the work of Michael Apple

Lois Weiss, Cameron McCarthy, and Greg Dimitriades (Eds), 2006
New York and London, Routledge
£16. 99 (pbk), 269 pp.
ISBN 0415951569

As the subtitle of this book indicates, it brings together contributions from a range of researchers who reflect on the significance of the work of the critical curriculum theorist, Michael Apple. Most but not all contributors are working in universities in the US. The book has three sections. The first section locates Apple's work in the broader tradition of neo-Marxist critiques of education that originated in the mid-1970s in the UK and were inspired by Bowles' *Schooling in capitalist America* (Bowles, 1976) in the US. The chapters in the second section seek to show how what they describe as Apple's evolving framework has enabled him to respond to the twin challenges of post modernism and globalization. The final section explores the progressive or radical 'spaces for change' that are a feature of Apple's work and how such possibilities can be identified even when the ruling hegemony seems most against them. The book ends with an Afterword (and two previously published interviews) by Michael Apple himself, in which he outlines the ideas that have influenced him and responds to the book.

Michael Apple has undoubtedly become one of the most widely known critical educational (or curriculum) theorists both in the English-speaking world and beyond. In his early work, he helped to expose the myth of education's political neutrality that was perpetuated by most mainstream curriculum theory. More recently, his writing has focused on the growing role of the political Right in the US.

At a time when the politics of education in this country appear to be exemplified by Conservatives complaining that Labour is stealing all their good (sic) ideas and when left or critical educational theory seems more and more on the defensive, a book revisiting Apple's work is most timely. The questions that I want to ask in this review are (a) does this book represent the kind of revisiting that we need?; and (b), is it, to quote from Michael Apple's own Afterword, an example of, 'the sincerest form of respect … (in treating) an author's work seriously enough to use it, criticize it and go beyond it'? (p. 213). Where I find myself disagreeing with Michael Apple is in his claim that, 'the chapters of this book do all of this' (p. 213). At least in my reading, they do nothing of the sort. With the exception of Geoff Whitty's comment in his Preface that critical educational studies in the US have, 'lacked compelling empirically grounded work', none of the contributors to this book examines the conceptual or evidential basis of Michael Apple's approach to critical educational theory. All the authors see themselves as supporting, continuing and developing a tradition that he started. I want to argue that there are good reasons why this is a less than adequate response and does less than justice to what Michael Apple originally set out to do.

As Geoff Whitty notes in his Preface, in the 1970s in the UK, he and I were involved in a similar project to Michael Apple's, albeit from our somewhat different origins in the sociology of education. It follows that in reviewing a book that revisits the work of Michael Apple, I cannot avoid referring to my own work at the time that began with the publication of *Knowledge and control* (Young, 1971) in 1971. I readily identify with the connections that Michael Apple refers to between that book and his *Ideology and curriculum* (Apple, 1979) that was published towards the end of the 1970s. Our books shared a broadly similar set of political priorities and a common theoretical concern with the relations between knowledge and power in education. However, my view now of this early work is rather different from Michael Apple's. I mention this because this difference has inevitably influenced my response to his work and, therefore, to the book under review. Furthermore, it has meant that, in the limited space available, the emphasis of this review is more on the general approach to educational theory shared by Michael Apple and the contributors to this book and less on the specific chapters in the book.

Like many working in educational studies, and specifically the contributors to this book, I was excited by Michael Apple's *Ideology and curriculum* when I first came across it over 25 years ago. It resonated with, and in certain ways extended, my own attempts to use the sociology of knowledge to develop a critical approach to the curriculum. However, despite its merits, I now think that his (and at the time my) concept of critical scholarship was seriously flawed. Michael Apple's work since the 1970s, and that of the editors and contributors to this book, over-politicizes educational issues to such an extent that they neglect the fundamental epistemological conditions that are necessary if the curriculum is to be an instrument of emancipation. Demonstrating the non-neutrality of the curriculum is only a starting point; it can easily be more negative than positive in its consequences as we have seen in the excessive instrumentalism of Labour Government policies since 1997. Practically, I think those of us in the UK and US and elsewhere who, since the 1970s, have tried to develop a critical approach to educational studies must address the unintended consequences of this over-politicization. In other words, we have to re-examine what we mean by being critical in educational or curriculum studies. Too much in this book is critical only at a rhetorical level. It asserts the endlessly political and socially regressive nature of aspects of the curriculum structures that we too easily take for granted. However, it never asks what a system that did not discriminate against the oppressed groups and subordinate classes might look like. Nor does it ask whether doing away with, or even transforming, the characteristic features of the current system- its subjects, its pedagogic hierarchies, its external examinations, its text books, etc, would make discrimination and inequality less or more likely.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many of us thought that if we exposed the power relations underlying curricula and convinced others that they were the reality of public education, somehow a more democratic and equal distribution of education would follow. This appears still to be the hope underlying Michael Apple's work and that of the contributors to this book. However, on a major criterion that links the quality of education to its wider distribution—that more people get access to the powerful knowledge that has been the exclusive property of the few—we have gone backwards, or at least not forwards, in the last 25 years. We have to ask what went wrong—not only in this country, with the educational policies of successive Labour governments, but with our critical theory. We cannot just go on re-asserting the class, gender and ethnic biases of the system. Who, after all, is listening except ourselves? Meanwhile, in the UK, so-called 'vocational' options and 'functional skills' are being introduced for 14-year-old low achievers under the superficially progressive mantras of widening participation and choice.

What critical curriculum theory in the US and the 'new' sociology of education in the UK forgot was not only that the curriculum is always an expression of power relations—even in the most benign and egalitarian systems such as those found in the Nordic countries—but that knowledge relations cannot be reduced to power relations. Emancipatory education always involves the acquisition of powerful knowledge and historically this knowledge has been expressed in disciplinary or subject forms. Critical curriculum theory has focused on the oppressive relations between knowledge and power embodied in these typical forms of school curricula. It has neglected the extent to which the knowledge from which the disadvantaged are excluded—in the social sciences, the natural sciences, in history and literature, languages and mathematics—is not just the 'knowledge of the powerful' but is, in an important sense, 'powerful knowledge itself'. As a result, such theory can critique neo-liberalism's endorsement of choice, markets and participation, but it has no alternative to offer.

Insofar as the question of knowledge is raised in current educational debates (and therefore what might really be meant by the wider distribution of educational opportunities), it tends to be associated with the voices of the Right not those of theorists of the Left in the sociology of education or critical curriculum theory. These are vital if uncomfortable issues that a living and engaged tradition of critical educational scholarship should not avoid. They have been missing in the critical tradition initiated by Michael Apple as they were in the 'new sociology of education' that emerged in the UK in the 1970s. It is not just a critique of the official curriculum that is needed, but a re-assessment of our own role as critical theorists.

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Conservative Party education policies 1976–1997: the influence of politics and personality

Daniel Callaghan, 2005
Brighton and Portland, OR, Sussex Academic Press
£ 19. 95 (hbk), vii + 234 pp
ISBN 1-8451-9120-X

Daniel Callaghan has had great fun in the writing of this book and the result is something of a *tour de force*. In support of the doctoral thesis that lies behind this attractively produced volume Callaghan persuaded most of the leading figures in Conservative education politics of the period to speak with him candidly. The fruits of these interviews have been interwoven with great skill among a wide range of other first hand accounts to form a sustained, blow-by-blow account of the making of 'high policy' over the period in England and Wales, with mesmerizing results. Indeed, the effect is of a bizarre cavalcade of figures processing across the political stage, a kind of crazed procession of political carnival floats passing before the spectator's eye. And to think: these people governed the country!

Fifty-four civil servants, lobbyists and Conservative politicians make up Callaghan's *dramatis personae* of the period and during his research the author secured interviews with 40, supplemented with a further seven with journalists and academics who were close to the action. The reporting of the interviewees' recollections informs around one quarter of the narrative and Callaghan is careful to ensure that the immediacy and impact of his fresh material is set alongside other accounts that get as close as possible to the words and deeds of the key participants. Indeed, a slackening of pace is discernable only when, from time to time, Callaghan introduces into the main narrative the findings of academic policy studies. Thus the book's appeal, and its enduring value, is as a first draft of history, with many of the best jokes and most sour enmities recorded for posterity.

There is a conventional structure to the account. Sandwiched between a short introduction and conclusion is a contextual chapter on the immediate pre-Conservative years, followed by eight chronological chapters forming a conventional narrative, one for the tenure of each Secretary of State but with two for Kenneth Baker. The narrative account is deftly handled and is central to the overall effect. In particular, the ideological wiring is laid to view. In one direction, the competing think tanks with their currents of influence connecting policy entrepreneurs via advisers and junior members of the government to the Secretary of State; in the other, the periodic intervention of the Prime Minister's office in education affairs, which along with the constant rebalancing of the ministerial team by Margaret Thatcher and John Major, placed persistent pressure on each of the 'here today, gone tomorrow' politicians who held the education brief in the Cabinet.

At the heart of the story lies the tension between those within and connected to the Conservative Party who sought to make policy (the 'politicos' and 'irregulars' in Callaghan's typology) and those in the Department for Education and Science and wider professional community (the 'regulars') who sought to shape it. The typology holds up reasonably well under exposure to the relentlessness of events and all three groups are presented as united in their demonizing of the professional interest that resided beyond the metropolitan policy elite—in the local education authorities and professional associations. In the main battle Callaghan concludes that no side won outright. No one Conservative faction saw off the others decisively and the key policies were ill-designed to the extent that they failed to achieve many of their political goals. The civil servants often, but not always, had the upper hand.

If this amounts to policy failure it was so on a grand scale and, by the end of the era he depicts, Callaghan shows also that the politics of education had been irrevocably altered by the attempt. Baker emerges in this account as the pivotal figure, reveling in a political moment that allowed him to put his name on the major legislation that had been building and moving though another political door before the full enormity of the task of implementation was laid bare. This opportunism is seen as emblematic. The civil servants had a long game in view—retention of control over state planning in education—and intuitively adjusted their tactics to suit. Successive cabinet ministers achieved neither. While they were united in their antipathy toward the 'educational establishment', they gave sufficient care neither to the selection of those appointed in the quangos to operationalize the major policies nor to detailed review of the processes and progress of implementation. HMI, an interesting and instructive player in the game, found common cause with the mandarins of the mid-1970s in asserting a view over the curriculum and standards, but in the longer run proved hopelessly ill-equipped to slug it out in the political arena they had chosen to enter. Keith Joseph's decision in 1982 to publish inspection results was the start of a process for the Inspectorate in which the emperor's clothes were gradually removed.

Callaghan's account is, in the main, clear-eyed and impartial, although some sympathies emerge. He admires Baker's brio. One of his main background sources, the *Times Educational Supplement*, he sees as something of a tiresome and entrenched mouthpiece for the professional viewpoint (p. 37), with its postures (p. 92) and lack of common sense (p. 107). Neither is the London Institute of Education spared, being depicted here as a prop to the 'education establishment' with a culture symptomatic of the aloof, complacent and backward-looking professional mood of the early 1980s (pp. 38, 55). Beyond this slight partiality, a few criticisms may be leveled. The title is misleading, for the book is concerned only with schools. Pre-school education is described as at 'the absolute periphery' of concern (p. 167) and while central policies directed toward the curbing of LEA power are discussed at length, the general reader at whom this book is aimed would have no inkling that a major local responsibility in the period was the governance of colleges of further education and polytechnics and that this was wrenched from local authority control through legislation enacted during 1989–1992. Given the aim of presenting an authoritative narrative of record, a more significant blemish is the lack of clarity experienced in a number of places by the reader who wishes to link information through the notes to the new interviews being reported. Similarly, the decision not to provide dates for the interviews (except in one case, February 2000, a note presumably imported from the earlier dissertation) is regrettable in an account that is highly unlikely to be surpassed as an immediate record of major Conservative reforms of 1979-97, recounted by those most centrally involved.

As in much good history, the footnotes are never wasted and contain some of the wryest writing. Above all, Callaghan enjoys the absurdities of human affairs and knows the merits of a good tale. This one is told with considerable relish and panache.

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